

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material adapted to be affixed to ~~the~~ an annulus of a cardiac valve having first and second leaflets, said ~~shaped~~ sheet having a ~~given~~ surface area configured to match and overlie at least a portion of ~~at least one~~ the first leaflet of the valve, and ~~said shaped sheet of material adapted to contact the at least~~ be contacted by a portion of the ~~at least one~~ second leaflet of the valve, ~~so as whereby to assist or replace the~~ facilitate closing ~~function of that~~ the valve leaflet.

2. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to prevent ~~leaflet~~ prolapse of the first leaflet.

3. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein said ~~given surface area~~ configuration of said shaped sheet of material is crescent shaped.

4. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim ~~3~~ 2 wherein the portion of the sheet of material ~~contacting~~ overlying the at least a portion of the ~~at least one~~ first leaflet includes at least one opening therein.

5. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 3 2 wherein the portion of the sheet of material ~~contacting~~ overlying at least a portion of the at least one leaflet is substantially solid.

6. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be ~~fastened~~ affixed to the annulus of the valve with sutures.

7. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 6 wherein the sheet of material includes preformed holes for receiving the suture.

8. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to be fastened to the annulus of the valve with staples.

9. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 8 wherein the sheet of material includes staples formed integral therewith.

10. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises biological material.

11. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises pericardium.

12. (Original) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the material comprises non-biological material.

13. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the material is round and includes at least one opening therein.

14. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a wire frame.

15. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 2 wherein the shaped sheet of material comprises a crescent shape with a mid-line projection adapted to support a second leaflet against prolapse.

16. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein the sheet of material is adapted to extend over at least two leaflets.

17. (Withdrawn) A valve shield according to claim 16 wherein the sheet of material includes at least one opening therein.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for reducing regurgitation in a cardiac valve having ~~a plurality of~~ first and second leaflets, ~~said the~~ method comprising:

providing a valve shield comprising a shaped sheet of material having a ~~given~~ surface area ~~configured~~ configuration to match and overlies at least a portion of ~~at least one~~ the first leaflet of the valve, and said shaped sheet of material being adapted to ~~contact~~ be contacted by the ~~at least a portion of the~~ at least one second leaflet of the valve; and

affixing the valve shield to the annulus of the valve so that ~~it contacts~~ the shield overlies the ~~at least a~~ portion of ~~at least one~~ the first leaflet of the valve, ~~so as to assist or replace the~~ facilitate closing function of ~~that the~~ valve leaflet.

19. (Currently Amended) A valve shield according to claim 1 wherein said shaped sheet of material ~~has a given~~ is provided with an outer periphery, and ~~a given length of the given outer~~ periphery is in part shaped to correspond to at least a ~~section~~ portion of the annulus of the valve.